

Assessing the Conservation Order for Light Geese in the Atlantic Flyway in 2019



Submitted in Fulfillment of the Reporting Requirements of the Conservation Order on Behalf of
the Participating States in the Atlantic Flyway

Snow Goose, Brant, and Swan Committee of the Atlantic Flyway Council

Assessing the Conservation Order for Light Geese in the Atlantic Flyway in 2019

In 2019, eight Atlantic Flyway states participated in the conservation order (CO) on light geese that was established by the light goose final rule (Federal Register Vol. 73, no 227) (Table 1). States differed in their administration of the CO season. All of the states, except for New York, required participants to obtain a permit to participate. Permits were obtained either online or through the mail. Maryland also issued permits through their automated licensing system. Maryland (\$5) and New Jersey (\$2) charged a fee for the permit. Pennsylvania, Delaware, Vermont, North Carolina and Virginia issued free permits. Participation in New York was complimentary of existing waterfowl hunting privileges.

Hunter activity was solicited through a paper hunting diary and/or online data entry administered by each state agency. Reporting of activity, regardless of participation, was required in six states that issued permits. New York surveyed a sample of people who registered in the Harvest Information Program (HIP) to estimate participation and harvest. Likewise, Maryland sampled a portion of hunters that had obtained their Snow Goose Conservation Order Permit. Follow up letters, emails, or phone calls to non-respondents were conducted in most states.

Table 1. 2019 “Light Goose” harvest regulations in Atlantic Flyway states participating in the snow goose conservation order.

State	Participate in CO in 2019?	Special Measures outside CO?	CO Dates	Special Measures in CO	Bag/Possession Limit	Participation requirements
Vermont	Yes	No	11 March - 26 April	All	15/None	Free permit
New York	Yes	Yes ¹	16 January - 15 April	All	25/None	Covered under existing waterfowl hunting privileges
New Jersey	Yes	No	16 February - 6 April, 2019	All	None/None	\$2 permit
Delaware	Yes	No	4 February - 8 February 11 February -12 April	All	None/None	Free Permit
Pennsylvania	Yes	No	21 January – 19 April (SBJP zone), 1 February – 19 April (AP zone), 25 February - 19 April (RP zone)	Extended hours, e-calls	25/None	Free Permit
Maryland	Yes – in AP goose zone	No	November 26 -December 8 February 4 - February 8 February 11 - April 15	All	None/None	\$5 permit
Virginia	Yes – in AP goose zone	No	1 February - 5 April	All	None/None	Free Permit
North Carolina	Yes	No	11 February – 31 March	All	None/None	Free Permit

¹ New York elected to use unplugged guns and electronic calls outside of the special CO, but within the normal light goose hunting frameworks.

Harvest and Hunter Participation

Six states (DE, NJ, PA, VA, NC and VT) utilized a permit system and sampled all hunters to estimate hunter effort and harvest. In these states, 4,387 permits were issued (Table 2), and 1,324 hunter reports were returned, for a response rate of 27%. In these states, an estimated 54% of all permit holders participated in the CO (n = 1,836). Maryland sampled a proportion (13.5%) of their permittees, and received responses from 26% of those sampled. Maryland estimated that 79% (2,928) of all permittees participated in the CO. In New York, a harvest survey was sent to 3,000 hunters, including every HIP registrant who said they had bagged a snow goose in 2018 (n=1,733). They received 1,403 responses to the survey for a response rate of 47%.

Flyway-wide, an estimated 6,251 hunters participated in the CO in 2019, up 58% from the previous year. The estimated retrieved flyway harvest of light geese was 49,792 with an additional 1,922 birds shot and lost (Figure 1, Table 2). Total retrieved harvest in 2019 was 2% higher than the 2018 estimate, and 1% higher than the past 10-year average (49,316) (Figure 1). The number of days hunted in 2019 was 10% higher than 2018 (Figure 1), and 2% higher than the past 10-year average (17,056).

Table 2. Estimates of Hunter activity and Harvest in the Atlantic Flyway Light Goose Conservation Order, 2019.

State	Permits Issued	Permits Returned	Response Rate	# of Hunters	Percent Participate	Days Hunted	Geese Shot and Retrieved	Geese Shot and Lost
Delaware	654	184	28%	487	74%	1,647	4,112	153
New Jersey	725	217	30%	566	78%	1,534	4,627	324
North Carolina	833	211	25%	101	48%	165	409	14
Pennsylvania	1,656	600	36%	417	25%	1,046	2,240	81
Virginia	349	70	20%	194	56%	688	648	35
Vermont	170	42	25%	71	40%	155	124	37
Total from 6 states that sampled all permit holders	4,387	1,324	27%	1,836	54%	5,235	12,160	644
Maryland*	3,698	96	26%	2928	79%	5,563	30,451	819
Total from 7 states that issued special permits	8,085	1,420	19%	4,764	57%	10,798	42,611	1,463
New York**				1487		6623	7,181	459
Atlantic Flyway Total	8,085	1,420		6,251		17,421	49,792	1,922

*Maryland sampled a portion (500 or 13.5%) of their special permit holders.

** In New York, all hunters holding existing waterfowl hunting privileges may participate in the Conservation Order.

New York sampled 3,000 individuals registered in HIP for the 2018-19 season. This included all registrants that indicated they had bagged one or more snow geese in 2018 and a proportion that did not hunt or were unsuccessful for snow geese the previous year.

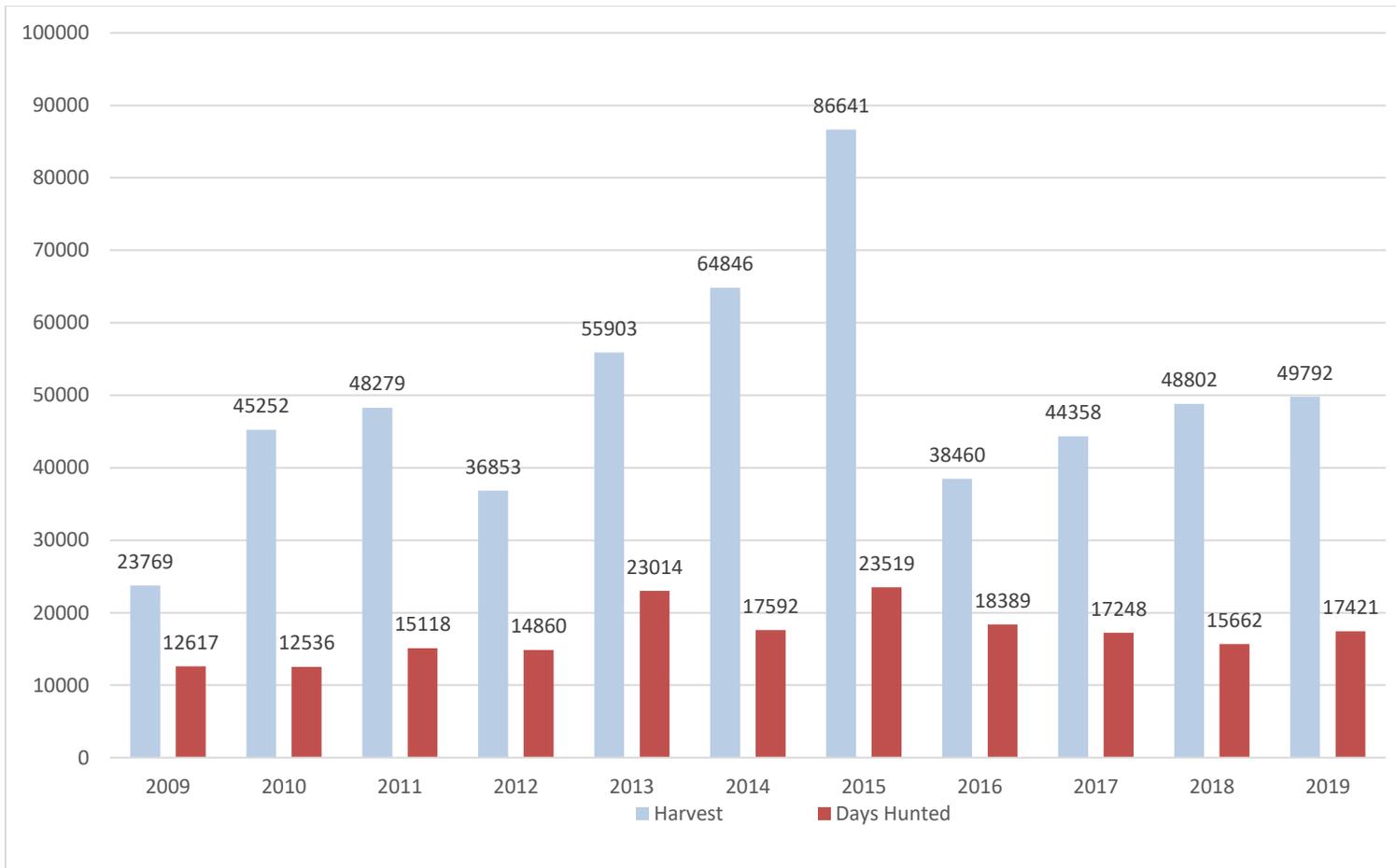


Figure 1. Retrieved harvest and number of days hunted in the Light Goose Conservation Order in the Atlantic Flyway, 2009-2019.